

Mr. Chairman, the priorities in this bill are misplaced. For years we made commitments to military retirees that they and their families were entitled to lifetime health care. Some may argue it is too expensive but the commitment was made and people relied upon it.

We can afford to honor our commitments. We are spending too much in this bill on too many unproven technologies, duplicative systems, and Congressional add-ons. We are not spending enough on our people or on environmental remediation of past actions.

We are making a down payment totaling \$2.2 billion on a national missile defense system that CBO estimated last month will cost \$60 billion over the next 15 years. Many describe our current approach to national missile defense as a 'rush to failure' that is resulting in excessive spending on a system that has only a spotty record of success.

We don't need three brand-new advanced fighter jets. We will have military air superiority over all potential adversaries for years to come with our current planes. The combined cost of the Air Force's F-22, the Navy's F-18 E/F, and the Joint Strike Fighter will be well over \$350 billion. This bill adds over \$3 billion this year for weapons systems that were not requested by the Pentagon and no funds were added to the personnel account for our troops.

Before we embark on new projects, we must address our primary responsibilities of taking care of our people who serve and have served in uniform and cleaning up our environment. If in the name of politics, we can give the military money it cannot afford for projects it does not need or want, then in the name of taking care of people, we can pay the bill and do it right. In the name of national security, we must not shortchange our people or the environment.

I regret that we did not have the opportunity to consider Congressman Allen's amendment giving the Pentagon the flexibility to dismantle strategic nuclear missiles it no longer wants or needs. We could save billions if we were not forced to maintain our nuclear arsenal at the START I level of 6,000 strategic nuclear weapons while Russia's forces continue to decline due to aging and funding shortfalls.

I am also disappointed that the McCarthy amendment was not allowed. It eliminated language that discriminates against gun manufacturers that have entered into common-sense agreements with our government to add child safety locks to their product. The McCarthy amendment would have allowed our government to lead by example by giving our business to gun manufacturers who want to bear some part of the responsibility for the end use of their

products. The fact that the leadership does not want members to vote on this issue is a sure signal that we would have prevailed. I hope the offending language will be removed in conference before the president signs this bill.

We have to ask ourselves, what is truly important? Should we spend more money on a military that is unrivaled anywhere in the world, while ignoring commitments to our military retirees and family's health care? I think not.